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THE GARDEN CALENDAR
Lawnseed

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A radio discussion by W. R. Beattie, Bureau of Plant Industry, and W. A. Wheeler, Bureau of Agricultural Economics, delivered in the Department of Agriculture period of the National Farm and Home Hour, broadcast by a network of 49 associate NBC radio stations, Tuesday, February 7, 1933.

Hello Folks: How many of you have lawns that are not quite as smooth and velvety as you would like? Oh, a lot of you, eh? Well, I'm not surprised for in most parts of the country, we have had three seasons that have been very hard on most lawn grasses, and there is need for a lot of reseeding and improvement. This year is starting out differently. In most localities there have been abundant winter rains, there is plenty of moisture in the soil, and it looks like next spring will be a good time to fix up the old lawn or make a new one.

I have some good news for you about lawn-grass seed today, especially for you folks who live in the sections where bluegrass and redtop are the main lawn grasses. The other day, Mr. W. A. Wheeler, of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, called me on the 'phone and said, "Say Beattie, are you familiar with the lawn-grass seed situation this year?" I admitted that I was not, at least, not fully and then he went on to tell me that the supply of high grade bluegrass and redtop seed is especially good this year, and some more good news about prices, so I asked him to come along with me today and give you the information. Mr. Wheeler is right here with me and I'm going to ask him to tell you what he told me over the 'phone a few days ago. Ladies and gentlemen, Mr. Wheeler - - - - -

MR. WHEELER:

When I talked with Mr. Beattie over the 'phone, I called his attention to a number of factors in the present grass-seed situation that I thought would be of interest to you folks who listen to his Garden Calendar talks each Tuesday, especially those of you who expect to sow a new lawn or renovate the old one this spring.

Yesterday, if you happened to listen in to Mr. Edler's talk on the Farm and Home Hour when he told you about supplies and prices of the important grass and legume seeds, he probably set you to thinking about your pasture and lawn seed requirements this spring. Today, I'm going to tell you especially about lawn-seed mixtures.

The first thing that you should consider in making a lawn is the kind and quality of seed that you will sow. The price is important too, but that is secondary to quality. In the past the price of high-quality lawnseed has been so high that it has encouraged the packaging and selling of many low-grade lawnseed mixtures; in fact, many of the cheap mixtures have been mostly chaff. Many persons who were unfamiliar with grass seeds have bought these low-priced, low-grade, mixtures with the thought that they were really buying good lawnseed, when, as a matter of fact, they were buying a mixture of mostly chaff, and the cheaper kinds of grass seeds that are unfitted for lawn purposes. The remedy for this is to buy seed only from a reliable dealer regardless of whether you wish to mix the ingredients yourself or to buy the seed already mixed.

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Under present conditions there is less reason than ever for sowing any low-grade lawnseed. When I say "any" I mean just that because there is no excuse this year for sowing any but good quality lawnseed, especially where Kentucky bluegrass and redtop are the important lawn grasses. The reason for this is the very low price of both of these seeds.

The present wholesale price of Kentucky bluegrass is less than one-third, and redtop less than one-fourth, of the 10-year average from 1922 to 1931, inclusive. White clover, which forms a small part of many lawn mixtures, is still relatively high. Its price is now about three-fourths of the 10-year average.

Farmers' Bulletin 1677F on the Planting and Care of Lawns, recommends for most of the northern two-thirds of the United States, a lawn mixture comprising 17 parts of Kentucky bluegrass, 2 parts redtop, and 1 part by weight of white clover. At current wholesale prices this mixture should cost the dealer less than one-third of the 10-year average price.

In certain localities and under some conditions modifications of this mixture are desirable, but these will not materially change the price relationship mentioned. Some of you may prefer to omit the white clover. Even at its relatively high price the small proportion of white clover usually sown makes it a small factor in the mixture price if you wish to use it. You should bear in mind that for practically all localities in the region mentioned Kentucky bluegrass should be the foundation of the mixture. If any one grass were to be known as the national lawn grass it would be Kentucky bluegrass.

So now, those of you who are planning some lawn development or improvement this spring, might well bear in mind from what I have told you that there is no use sowing any but high-grade lawnseed this spring, because the price of good seed is now less than one-third of recent prices. Furthermore, there is little or no occasion to look around for substitutes for Kentucky bluegrass and redtop seed because, in the past, they were relatively high. You should buy them, or mixtures containing a generous proportion of them, this spring at less than substitutes have cost in the past.

MR. BEATTIE:

One question Mr. Wheeler. What about the supply and prices of lawnseeds for the South and other sections where bluegrass and redtop are not suitable?

MR. WHEELER:

Bermuda and all grass seeds used for lawns or in special lawnseed mixtures have shared the general reduction in price. In some cases the reduction has not been so great as with bluegrass and redtop but the supply is ample and the wholesale prices are very low as compared with the ten year average.

MR. BEATTIE:

Thank you Mr. Wheeler, and now folks when you buy lawnseed this spring remember that the quality of the seed should be better than at any time within many years and that the wholesale price of bluegrass is less than one-third, and of redtop less than one-fourth of the ten year average. Given favorable weather conditions this spring should be a good time to start a lawn or improve an old one, although our best authorities on lawns tell us that the late summer or early fall is the best time to seed down a lawn. With good seed at low prices it may pay to seed the lawn in the spring then if it fails reseed in the fall.